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19. The Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference was a conference for internationally-known scholars in the field of language comprehension. Its format was unlike any currently available for disseminating and discussing language comprehension research. It was a small (only 27 participants), intense, two-and-a-half day conference in which participants had the opportunity to interact both formally and informally. Each participant gave a 30-minute talk overviewing the current state of his or her research. A thirty-minute round-table talk discussion followed each set of two or three talks. Informal interaction occurred during sixteen hours of group meals and other activities.



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The 1989 Sylvia Beach Language
Comprehension Conference

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Final Report

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**The 1989 Sylvia Beach
Language Comprehension Conference**

The talks at the 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference were centered around the following important topics: the role of working memory in language comprehension, the nature of individual differences in language comprehension, the representation and use of inferences during language comprehension, the development of language comprehension, the comprehension of figurative language, the comprehension of anaphora, strategies involved in parsing, models of sentence and discourse production, the nature of mental representations of text, including the role of causal connectedness, and electrophysiological measures of language comprehension.

**Presentation Abstracts from the
1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension
Conference**

DONALD J. FOSS, University of Texas

**The Psychology of Attachment,
or Can a Psycholinguist Love a Girl from Sylvia Beach?**

Dr. Foss reported a series of experiments in which he investigated the influence of context, verb type, and preposition on the resolution of structural ambiguities. Structural ambiguities are sentences such as, "The knight fought the foot soldier with a lance." In this sentence, *with the lance* could be either a manner (how the knight fought the foot soldier) or a descriptive adjective (which foot soldier? The one with the lance.) In the experiment Dr. Foss described structurally ambiguous sentences were presented both visually (and subjects self-paced their reading of them) and auditorily (and subjects performed a phoneme monitoring task). Dr. Foss found significant interactions between context, verb type and preposition. These data suggest that multiple sources are consulted when comprehenders encounter structural ambiguities. Dr. Foss joined the chorus of researchers who question "simple" models of parsing.

CHARLES E. CLIFTON, University of Massachusetts

Parsing Arguments

Dr. Clifton described four experiments in which he studied the comprehension of sentences with relation between empty positions and phrases displaced from the positions (these are known as "gaps" and "fillers"). In his self-paced reading and end-of-sentence acceptability judgment tasks, he found that comprehenders prefer to assign an identified filler as the argument of a verb immediately, other than waiting to check the input for a lexical item of the expected category. He proposed that the parser follows an "active filler strategy" which ranks the option of a gap above other options in the domain of an identified filler. The preference for a gap over lexical item was evidenced even when a clause boundary separated the filler and gap. He proposed that in processing a "long" movement (across more than one clause), the parser must assign the filler to a special "non argument" position in a successive cyclic fashion. This view is consistent with the successive cyclic analysis of long distance dependencies offered by some grammars.

LYN FRAZIER, University of Massachusetts

Parsing

Dr. Frazier summarized the evidence that comprehenders construct a grammatical representation of sentences during comprehension. She suggested that the principles underlying constituent structure analysis have been investigated in some detail. She also briefly summarized the work that is being done in languages other than English. Finally, she suggested that the interaction of structural principles with item-specific lexical preferences and with discourse constraints should be the focus of further research.

DON C. MITCHELL, University of Exeter, United Kingdom

The End of the Garden-Path: A 2-Stage Unification Model of Human Parsing

Dr. Mitchell introduced his talk by suggesting that presently the "standard" theory of human parsing is almost certainly Frazier's (1979, 1987) Garden-Path theory. Following this introduction, Dr. Mitchell outlined a number of the limitations of this theory, drawing attention in particular to recent (non-American) evidence on limitations in the generality of the parsing principles. He stressed the importance of the hitherto underemphasized procedures that are needed to handle dependence relationships (e.g., consistency of gender and number within and across linguistic units, consistency of lexical and structural information

etc.). He outlined a model which highlights such "monitoring" or "filtering" processes. It was a two-stage computational model based on the formalisms of Functional Unification Grammar (FUG).

MURRAY SINGER, University of Manitoba, Canada

Individual Differences in Inference Processing

Dr. Singer examined how two factors affect comprehenders' accuracy and latency in making bridging inferences while they are reading brief stories. The two factors were reading span and one's tendency to access relevant world knowledge during comprehension. Bridging inferences are those assumptions one must draw to make sense of a passage. Dr. Singer's results demonstrate that the ability to draw bridging inferences is crucial to comprehension skill.

GAIL A. MCKOON, Northwestern University

Inferences "For Free"

According to McKoon and Ratcliff's minimalist point of view, inferences are not generated during reading unless the information required for them is quickly and easily available. Dr. McKoon identified several kinds of information that fit this description and support inferences.

MARTA KUTAS, University of California at San Diego

An Electrophysiological Route to Comprehension

Dr. Kutas described some of her recent event-related potential (ERP) data on the role of contextual constraint on the processing of open and closed class words. By contextual constraint, she means semantic constraints as well as syntactic constraints. Her results fit a model on on-line use of contextual information during language comprehension.

KERRY KILBORN, MPI Fur Psycholinguistik, The Netherlands

Grammar Out of Sync: What Agrammatism Can Tell Us About the Temporal Course of Syntactic Processing

Dr. Kilborn described three experiments using the same subjects and language materials. Agrammatic Broca's

aphasics and age-matched controls performed versions of a cross-modal syntactic priming task in which the auditory prime (a Dutch auxiliary) forms either a grammatical or an ungrammatical link with the visual lexical decision target (a past participle). In Experiments 1 and 2, the timing relation between the prime and target were varied, with an interstimulus interval of 0 msec in Experiment 1 and 200 msec in Experiment 2. Experiment 1 demonstrated that agrammatic aphasics are sensitive to grammatical constraints during on-line comprehension. Experiment 2 demonstrated that agrammatics differ from normals in the length of time syntactic information can prime. Experiment 3 replicated Experiment 1, except that instead of instructions to pay close attention to both the prime and the target, subjects were explicitly instructed to ignore the auditory material and pay attention only to the visual target. Normals cannot successfully ignore the prime, and the grammaticality effect is obtained as in Experiment 1, which points to automatic processing. Aphasics do ignore the prime, eliminating the grammaticality effect. This result points to a controlled rather than automatic level of processing.

BRIAN MACWHINNEY, Carnegie-Mellon University

A Crosslinguistic View on Sentence Comprehension

Dr. MacWhinney discussed the Competition Model framework. In his work, Dr. MacWhinney has looked at the comprehension of simple and complex sentences in 10 languages by normals, children, second language learners, and aphasics. He mentioned the outlines of the model used to account for these data and ways in which it is being extended to account for on-line processing data.

KATHYRN BOCK, University of Michigan

Disagreement in Production and Comprehension

Dr. Bock discussed the features of agreement errors in natural and elicited speech. These errors suggest that concord between the subjects and verbs of sentences is established very early in syntactic planning, and is not easily disrupted. In contrast, readers barely notice agreement errors in texts. This disparity emphasizes the differences in the role of syntax in production and comprehension.

CHARLES A. PERFETTI, University of Pittsburgh

Parsing Contexts for a Cooperative-Autonomous Language Processor

Dr. Perfetti discussed theories of sentence parsing. He paid particular attention to claims about the relative autonomy of the language processor. He reviewed several studies that supported the garden-path theory of resolving syntactic ambiguities. In contrast, he suggested a cooperative-autonomous theory.

RAYMOND W. GIBBS, University of California at Santa Cruz

The Resurrection of Dead Metaphors

Dr. Gibbs confronted the assumption that idioms, such as "blowing one's stack," are dead metaphors (metaphors that no longer have real world referents). Dr. Gibbs suggested that humans do interpret idioms as metaphors - but metaphors with conceptual (not literal) referents. He presented the results of two experiments in which subjects agreed closely on the mental images evoked with idioms. These uniform mental images are the conceptual referents to which idioms refer.

THOMAS R. TRABASSO, University of Chicago

Story Production and Plans of Action

Dr. Trabasso studied hierarchical goal plans of action by having 3-, 4-, 5-, and 9-year-old children and adults narrate a picture story. He derived causal network representations for the 58 narrations. The primary findings were that 3-year olds identify states, 4-year-olds focus on actions, 5-year-olds begin to express goals as purposes, and 9-year-olds and adults evidence second and third order goal hierarchies. The development of encoding goal plans moves from description to explanation with actions and outcomes serving as the basis for inferring internal states (goals, cognitions and emotions).

PAUL VAN DEN BROEK, University of Minnesota

**Inferential Processes During Reading:
The Effects of Causal Constraints**

Dr. van den Broek described his process model of inference generation during reading. This model specifies constraints that operate on the inferential process, in particular causal ones such as necessity and sufficiency. These

constraints lead to predictions about points in a text where elaborations, reinstatements and other causal inferences are likely to occur. These constraints also lead to predictions about the type of information that these inferences contain. Dr. Van den Broek presented experimental evidence on the model's predictions concerning elaborations and reinstatements.

CHARLES R. FLETCHER, University of Minnesota

A Computer Model of Narrative Comprehension and Recall

Dr. Fletcher presented an overview of a model that borrows liberally from existing theories of comprehension (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Trabasso & van den Broek, 1985), problem solving (Newell & Simon, 1972), and retrieval of long-term memory (Raaijmakers & Shiffrin, 1981). The model accounts for the comprehension data and recall protocols of subjects reading and remembering narrative text.

NANCY STEIN, University of Chicago

Reasoning and Thinking about Winning Arguments: A Developmental Study

Dr. Stein presented a model of how people construct evidence in an argument and how they go about attempting to win arguments. She presented the results of three empirical studies that document and demonstrate the theoretical principles underlying the resolution of conflict. The type of arguments presented to both children and adults were interactive in that the two parties in an argument become aware that they had mutually exclusive goals concerning a set of actions, events, or beliefs. Each party to the argument then asserted that he or she supported a particular position. The results demonstrated that the recall of the context surrounding an argument is remembered selectively as a function of which position was supported by subjects. Moreover, explanations vary with respect to the position taken, and the position taken in an argument is also influenced by the specific values of an arguer in terms of what is considered more important.

DAVID J. TOWNSEND, Montclair State College

Comprehension and Learning in an Interactive Model of Discourse Processing

Dr. Townsend discussed a general model of text processing. The model views language processing as a functionally-

modular system in which linguistic structures interact in systematic ways with other cognitive systems. The model accounts for a wide range of results, ranging from the effects of linguistic structures on comprehension, to the effects of context on comprehension, to individual differences in text comprehension. He reviewed evidence for this model, some of which comes from classic experiments in psycholinguistics. His presentation focused mainly on the results of four experiments that examine the strategies that skilled and average comprehenders use to comprehend sentences that appear in semantically-supportive vs semantically-neutral texts. The goal of these experiments was to determine how comprehension skill and semantic context interact with aspects of text processing: determining thematic relations between propositions, forming complete propositions, and determining semantic relations within propositions. He outlined some of the implications of this processing model for how people learn from text.

MARCEL JUST, Carnegie-Mellon University

Individual Differences in Comprehension

Dr. Just described several studies that find systematic individual differences in the way that people process syntactic complexities (center-embedded sentences) and syntactic ambiguities (reduced relatives). He presented a theory of working memory constraints that accounted for his findings. Although all subjects appeared to be using similar comprehension algorithms, the variation among subjects in working memory capacity systematically affected the implementation of those algorithms.

JANE OAKHILL, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Children's Comprehension Problems: Does Working Memory Have a Role?

Dr. Oakhill discussed the nature of the differences between skilled and less-skilled (child) comprehenders. She described some experiments which suggest that skilled and less-skilled comprehenders differ in their working memory ability. She also presented other results, from a training study, that suggest that deficient working memory cannot be a complete explanation of children's comprehension difficulties.

ALAN GARNHAM, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Toward a More Realistic Theory of Anaphor

Comprehension

Dr. Garnham spoke about Hankamer and Sag's distinction between model-interpretive anaphors and ellipsis. He approached this distinction from the mental model framework. Hankamer and Sag proposed that model-interpretative anaphors are interpreted with respect to a content-based representation. In contrast, ellipses are interpreted with respect to a representation of surface form. Dr. Garnham presented evidence from a collection of anaphors from published material and from experimental work that demonstrated how Hankamer and Sag's theory needs to be revised.

KARL HABERLANDT, Trinity College

Integration of Information Across Clauses and Sentences

According to Dr. Haberlandt, intersentence integration is the process by which a reader assimilates information from successive segments of a text into the evolving text representation. Dr. Haberlandt summarized his research on intersentence integration and on new-argument effects. He also presented several paradoxes of integration, and discussed some challenges for models of integration.

GREG B. SIMPSON, University of Nebraska

Lexical Access and Meaning Suppression

Subjects saw homograph primes and named targets that were related to the homograph's dominant or subordinate meaning, or were unrelated. On a later trial, the homograph was repeated with the same target, a new target related to the same meaning, or a new target related to the other meaning. Responses were slowest when the meaning was changed from the first presentation to the second, suggesting the suppression of a meaning that is inconsistent with a prior retrieval.

KENNETH FORSTER, University of Arizona

Priming by Form-Similarity with Masked Primes

Dr. Forster presented and described an interesting phenomenon: He has found strong priming effects with masked primes for primes and targets having a high degree of orthographic overlap, but no effects for moderate degrees of overlap. However, an extremely rapid train of partially overlapping primes produces a strong summation effect, so

that the normally ineffective primes presented in rapid succession (20 msec per prime) produce strong priming for the target.

BARBARA C. MALT, Lehigh University

**Features, Cores, Boundaries, and Beliefs:
The Nature of Word Meanings**

Dr. Malt discussed theories of word meaning and some of her own work on word meanings/concept representations.

MARY C. POTTER, MIT Center for Cognitive Science

**Conceptual and Lexical Representation in the Immediate
"Verbatim" Recall of Sentences**

Dr. Potter spoke on the following phenomenon: By presenting lexical lures (synonyms) in a subsidiary task, one can induce systematic intrusions in the immediate (and largely verbatim) recall of sentences. Intrusions depend on the sentence meaning, not just the word-word associations. She identified a second type of intrusion in which a conceptual component of the target sentence is displaced by a lure that produces a more familiar or expected completion for the sentence as a whole. She discussed implications for the representation of sentences in short-term memory.

ARTHUR C. GRAESSER, Memphis State University

Question Answering in the Context of Narrative Text

Dr. Graesser described his work in the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the answering of why, how, when, and other complex questions. He presented a model of question answering (called QUEST). He also presented data that tested the model in the context of short stories.

LYNNE REDER, Carnegie-Mellon University

**Partial Matching during Reading:
What Eye Fixations Tell Us About the Moses Illusion**

The Moses Illusion refers to the following phenomenon: Subjects read the question, "How many animals of each species did Moses take on the Arc?" Subjects rapidly answer, "Two," and typically fail to mention that Noah, not Moses took animals on the Arc. Dr. Reder studied subjects' eye fixations to discern whether subjects spend less time on the critical word (e.g., Moses) when they fail to detect the

illusion than when they successfully detect it. Her fixation data nicely paralleled her reaction time and error rate data.

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

Beside each researcher is a brief description of his or her research interests.

Charles E. Clifton (University of Massachusetts) studies sentence parsing and syntactic processing during discourse comprehension. Dr. Clifton has been an Associate Editor of Memory & Cognition and a member of the NSF Memory & Cognitive Processes review panel, and is currently a member of the AFOSR Program in Cognitive Science review panel.

Charles R. Fletcher (University of Minnesota) studies working memory in building textual representations. Dr. Fletcher uniquely combines data from laboratory-based studies with the results of computer simulations in his research program.

Donald J. Foss (University of Texas) studies lexical access during comprehension of sentences and discourse. Dr. Foss is currently chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas and chair of the American Psychological Association's Board of Editors.

Lyn Frazier (University of Massachusetts) studies syntactic parsing during sentence comprehension. Dr. Frazier is a linguist who has actively collaborated with psycholinguists such as Charles Clifton and Keith Rayner. Dr. Frazier has become very knowledgeable about exploring linguistic performance questions with psycholinguistic methodology (such as eye movements).

Alan Garnham (University of Sussex) studies anaphora, definite reference, and mental models as representational media during the comprehension and representation of discourse. Dr. Garnham is the author of a currently, very popular textbook on language comprehension.

Raymond Gibbs (University of California, Santa Cruz) studies the comprehension of figurative language including metaphor, sarcasm, and the use of rhetorical questions.

Arthur Graesser (Memphis State University) studies narrative processing, question answering, and inference making. Dr. Graesser is the author of two books dealing

with language comprehension.

Karl Haberlandt (Trinity University) studies component processes in comprehension. In collaboration with A. Graessar, Dr. Haberlandt has been instrumental in introducing language comprehension researchers to the use of regression analysis.

Kerry Kilborn

Marta Kutas (University of California at San Diego) studies evoked response potentials during comprehension. In collaboration with Dr. Steven Hillyard, Dr. Kutas has investigated the effects of semantic cohesion and anomaly on brain activity during comprehension.

Barbara C. Malt

Brian MacWhinney (Carnegie-Mellon University) studies language acquisition and the development of language comprehension. Dr. MacWhinney is one of the few researchers who studies language comprehension cross-linguistically. Dr. MacWhinney is the editor of the recent book, Mechanisms of Language Acquisition.

Gail McKoon

Don Mitchell (University of Exeter, UK) studies parsing, word recognition, and reading comprehension. Dr. Mitchell has recently been investigating cross-linguistic parsing strategies.

Jane Oakhill (University of Sussex, UK) studies anaphora and the role of mental models in guiding discourse interpretation and representation. Another facet of Dr. Oakhill's research focuses on individual and developmental differences in reading skill.

Charles E. Perfetti (University of Pittsburgh) studies reading and individual differences in comprehension skill. In particular, Dr. Perfetti has investigated the nature of phonological representations during reading. Dr. Perfetti is currently the co-director of the Learning and Research Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

Mary Potter (MIT) studies sentence comprehension and was a pioneer of the RSVP method of investigation. Dr. Potter has also investigated the mental representation of sentences versus pictures.

Lynn Reder (Carnegie-Mellon University) studies how comprehenders mentally organize their representations of

text. In particular, she has recently examined how comprehenders answer questions about previously comprehended discourse.

Greg Simpson (University of Nebraska) studies the role of meaning and context on lexical access, including hemispheric differences in the contribution of semantic context to lexical access. Dr. Simpson is currently editing a book on lexical access during sentence comprehension.

Murray Singer (University of Manitoba) studies inferences and inferential reasoning during language comprehension. Dr. Singer has recently authored a textbook on sentence and discourse processing.

Nancy Stein (University of Chicago) studies story structure and memory for text. In particular, Dr. Stein investigates the development of story comprehension and memory for organized discourse.

David Townsend (Montclair State College) studies the effects of organizational, functional, and behavioral properties of text on sentence processing. Dr. Townsend actively collaborates with T. Bever (of the University of Rochester).

Tom Trabasso (University of Chicago) studies the role of causal connections in the mental representation of text. Dr. Trabasso is currently chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Chicago.

Paul van den Broek (University of Minnesota) also studies the role of causal connections in the mental representation of text, and was a doctoral student with Tom Trabasso. One of Dr. van den Broek's recent publications is a contribution to G.H. Bower's Psychology of Learning and Motivation.

J. Kathryn Bock (Michigan State University) studies the influence of syntax during language planning and production. Dr. Bock presented a major invited address at the recent meeting of the American Psychological Association. She solely represented the field of psycholinguistics.

Kenneth Forster (University of Arizona) studies lexical access and sentence comprehension. Dr. Forster was a pioneer in the area of sentence comprehension and meaning. This summer, Dr. Forster will teach a course in psycholinguistics (and, in particular, sentence processing) at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, sponsored by the Linguistic Society of America.

Dr. Marcel Just (Carnegie-Mellon University) studies individual differences in language comprehension. Dr. Just recently finished a four-year term as co-editor of the Journal of Memory and Language, the primary publication for language comprehension researchers.

The list of participants includes researchers who study a wide array of topics within the general area of language comprehension. The list also includes a handful of more junior scholars as well as the established leaders in the field. Participants came from the United Kingdom (Garnham, Oakhill, Mitchell) as well as Canada (Ferreira, Singer, Daneman). Other Europeans were very interested in attending but were not be able to attend this year because their research grants do not cover travel expenses and they have depleted their personal travel funds (L. Tyler, W. Marslen-Wilson, A. Cutler of the UK, and Patricia Tabossi of Italy).

The above list of participants for the 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference does not include many outstanding language comprehension researchers. My hope is that in future years all of those I have unintentionally overlooked will attend this conference.

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES (WHO DID NOT GIVE TALKS)

Gordon Bower

Herbert H. Clark (Stanford University) studies comprehension and production during conversation and co-authored a seminal textbook in language comprehension. Dr. Clark is currently chair of the Department of Psychology at Stanford University.

Fernanda Ferreira (University of Alberta) also studies parsing, and was a doctoral student with Charles Clifton at the University of Massachusetts and an undergraduate with Murray Singer at the University of Edmonton. Dr. Ferreira is one of the most active researchers of her generation.

Swinney, David

Michael K. Tanenhaus (University of Rochester) studies parsing and lexical access during sentence and discourse processing and has recently been using evoked response potentials as a index to understanding these issues. Dr. Tannenhaus is currently writing the 1990 Annual Review chapter on psycholinguistics and is a member of the NSF Linguistics Program review panel.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION OF THE 1989 SYLVIA BEACH LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION CONFERENCE

I organized the first Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference in the following way. In the fall of 1989, I consulted with Herbert H. Clark (of Stanford University) and Donald J. Foss (of the University of Texas). Both researchers strongly supported the idea and encouraged me to continue planning. Later in the fall I wrote an initial letter of inquiry to 21 potential participants, who were selected because of their reputation in the field, because they would be attending the Psychonomics meeting, and because I had been introduced to them. At the Psychonomic Society meetings in mid-November, I hand delivered to each of these 21 potential participants a letter that briefly described the conference. The recipients were asked to indicate whether they were interested in attending.

The response to this initial letter was overwhelmingly positive. All 21 researchers indicated very strong interest; many volunteered that they had felt a need for this type of conference and were glad that it was being organized. Seventeen of the 21 indicated that they were "definitely interested in attending such a conference this summer;" the other four indicated that they were definitely interested in attending such a conference, but that they could not attend during the summer of 1989 because of prior commitments.

In mid-December, I again contacted the 17 scholars who had indicated that they were interested in attending the conference, and I contacted for the first time an additional 23 scholars. This second letter provided the dates, location, and format of the Sylvia Beach Conference. The response to this second letter was again overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, although I originally planned for only 25 scholars to attend the Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference of 1989, 32 enthusiastic participants attended.

The 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference, supported by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, was highly successful. Its success is documented by the results of a 6-item questionnaire that I distributed on the last day of the conference:

When asked how valuable the conference was in comparison with other conferences that the participants typically attend (e.g., Psychonomic Society or Cognitive Science Society), 60% chose the highest value on the rating scale, which was labeled, "EXTREMELY Valuable." Another 32% chose the next highest value, "VERY Valuable." The remaining 8% said, "Valuable."

When asked how likely it is that they would attend this conference again in a few years, 92% chose the highest value on the rating scale, which was "VERY Likely." The remaining 8% chose the next highest value, "Likely."

When asked if they would encourage other language comprehension researchers to attend this conference, 88% chose the highest value on the rating scale, which was "DEFINITELY Yes." The remaining 12% chose the next highest value, "Yes."

When asked whether they thought this conference would stimulate their future research, 56% chose the highest value on the rating scale, which was "DEFINITELY Yes." Another 36% chose the next highest value, "Yes." Two participants wrote in, "It already has!"

When asked to rate the overall quality of the papers presented at this conference in comparison with other conferences that the participants typically attend (e.g., Psychonomic Society or Cognitive Science Society), 36% chose the highest value on the rating scale: "CONSIDERABLY ABOVE" (the quality of the papers at other conferences); another 52% said the papers were "ABOVE" the quality of papers presented at other conferences, and only the remaining 12% said they were of average quality. None of the participants said the papers were below the quality of papers presented at the conferences they typically attend.

When asked to rate the overall quality of the discussion at this conference in comparison with other conferences that the participants typically attend (e.g., Psychonomic Society or Cognitive Science Society), 52% chose the highest value on the rating scale: "CONSIDERABLY ABOVE" (the quality of the discussion at other conferences); another 32% said it was "ABOVE" the quality of other conferences, and only the remaining 16% said it was comparable in quality. None of the participants said the discussion was below the quality available at the conferences they typically attend.

Several participants wrote anonymous comments on their questionnaires. These comments are listed below:

"Probably the most useful and inspiring conference I've ever been to."

"Very fine, both in intensity of relevant work and in ambience, etc. Could hardly have packed more of either into two days."

"An excellent conference, indeed."

"Best conference ever attended, in many more ways than one."

Could stimulate the field to new heights."

"Excellent opportunity to see what problems other people working on and to get feedback on one's own work. Good job."

"This is the best conference I have ever attended."

"Bravo!"

"Very nice and tightly organized yet enough time for discussion on a less formal basis. Excellent job."

"Superb organization. One of the best conferences. Keep it smaller, maybe no more than 20-25 people!"

"Very, very well organized."

In addition, once I returned from the conference, I received the following *unsolicited* comments via electronic and postal mail:

"Congratulations on the huge success of the Sylvia Beach Language Conference. It was one of the best meetings that I've ever attended. It was focussed, well organized, and yet left time for free wheeling discussion (the evening session was great for discussion). Thanks to the meeting I will be in contact soon with two or three people whose work has a direct bearing on our own. You and your assistants did a great job. Please feel free to share this view with whomever you please. " (Don Foss)

"You put on a wonderful conference and you and your co-workers are to be congratulated with its organization. I think the Air Force Office of Scientific Research got their money's worth in terms of scientific interchanges." (Gordon Bower)

"I wanted to thank you for a wonderful conference and for working so hard to make it so. I really enjoyed it, and it served to get me to get stuff together for publication. ... It was definitely worth [your] effort - a great conference." (Lynne Reder)

"The conference was terrific. I learned a lot and enjoyed myself as well." (Karl Haberlandt)

"I just wanted to tell you what an extraordinary event you just pulled off, and to offer my congratulations and gratitude both. " (Kay Bock)

"I just wanted to write to thank you for organizing such a wonderful conference. People are tired of hearing me talking about it. " (Fernanda Ferreira)

"Thank you again for serving up such a fine conference."
(Molly Potter)

"Thanks so much for a really pleasant conference. Professionally, it was a good experience, and the Oregon coast is lovely. We hope there can be another similar conference in a couple of years!" (Gail McKoon & Roger Ratcliffe)

"I wanted to take a minute to thank you for all the effort you and your troops put into the Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference. It was far and away the most stimulating (and enjoyable) conference that I have ever attended. " (Randy Fletcher)

"Congratulations on running a great conference. I thought the conference ran very smoothly, thanks to your unrelenting adherence to a rigid time schedule! The presentations were excellent. Good going." (David Townsend)

"Great conference. Thanks for thinking of it and for putting it on so beautifully." (Chuck Perfetti)

"Just wanted to thank you for a wonderful conference."
(Paul van den Broek)

"It was a great conference. I have never been to one like it. The effort you and your team put into making everyone feel comfortable was prodigious. The result of that effort was a truly memorable experience. Put me down on your list for any future conferences you might care to organize. "
(Ken Forster)

"Just wanted to say thanks again for the conference. It was great." (Barbara Malt)

"I would like to thank you once again for organizing a superb conference on natural language comprehension. I was extremely satisfied with all phases of the conference. Your attention to detail couldn't have been better." (Art Graesser)

"Your conference was just GREAT. I enjoyed myself and thought you guys did an excellent job on everything." (Herb Clark)

"Many thanks again for a FANTASTIC conference. The best we've ever been to!" (Jane Oakhill & Alan Garnham)

"I didn't get a chance to tell you at the end what a great conference you held. You should really be pleased. It was very productive and also enjoyable. I hope you consider

doing it again." (Greg Simpson)

"Thanks. I found the conference thoroughly stimulating."
(Don Mitchell)

"Thank you very much for organizing a superb conference. My wife and I are enjoying our tour of the Oregon Coast, but I'm sorry I'm not back in my lab this week to pursue some of the ideas I heard about or discussed with the other participants. Congratulations on a great conference."
(Murray Singer)

"I wanted to thank you for everything you did to make the Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference the success that it was. It is important that we have a network of people who are working on language, discourse, and text, and you made it possible. I also appreciate your enthusiasm and commitment. Nancy and I learned a lot from the variety of talks. I was amazed that I was able to listen to and learn from every speaker. We also appreciated the opportunity to present on our work. " (Tom Trabasso)

"Thanks again for doing such a fabulous job organizing the conference." (Lyn Frazier)

Thus, the 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference met the three goals I outlined earlier: It brought together an internationally known group of language comprehension scholars; they communicated state-of-the-art descriptions of their research programs, and they interchanged scientific ideas. The comments of the participants demonstrate that the 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference produced seeds of new research ideas, instigated new collaborations, and increased the identity of the field. In addition, the 1989 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference produced 32 half-hour taped lectures that are available to researchers. Already, I have reproduced and distributed 10 tapes.

I am confident that the 1990 Sylvia Beach Language Comprehension Conference will be equally successful.